

Remarks

Claims 1, 2, 6-12, 14-15, and 31-44 are pending for the Examiner's consideration. Claims 1, 10, 31, 37, and 43 have been amended. Claims 3-5, 13 and 16-30 have been canceled, and claim 15 has been withdrawn from consideration. No new matter is believed to have been added.

Claim 10 was rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being dependent upon a cancelled claim. In response, claim 10 has been amended to depend from pending claim 1.

In the Office Action, claims 31-42 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,384,002 to Leatherman *et al.* The rejection respectfully is overcome.

The Office Action states:

It should be noted that if the applicant amends line 7 of claim 31 and line 8 of claims 37 in the following manner “~~guiding~~ rolling the first free end between spaced first and second guides”, claims 31-42 will be placed in condition for allowance.

(Office Action, p. 6). In response, claims 31 and 37 have been so amended.

Claims 1, 2, 6-9, 11, 12, 14, 43, and 44 were rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,037,033 to Hunter in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,994,361 to Gable *et al.* The rejection respectfully is traversed.

The Office Action states:

It is unclear if Hunter discloses a method wherein the first layer is rolled between spaced first and second guides configured to contact the first layer and guide the first layer along a heated guide surface toward the second layer.

(Office Action, p. 5). But, the Office Action states:

Gable discloses a method of edge sealing thermoplastic ends 10, 11 (column 2, lines 22-27) of first 1 and second 2 thermoplastic layers, said method comprising rolling (figure 5) the first layer between spaced first 6 and second 5 guides.

(*Id.*). In figure 5, Gable shows a conveyor 22.

Applicant's specification discloses an embodiment, for example, in which "second section 12b has a guide surface that is contoured or arcuated to guide and roll the tab 6." (Specification, page 10, lines 4-5). The specification further discloses an embodiment in which "the guides starts to bend or roll the tabs." (*Id.*, page 14, line 24).

Claim 1 has been amended to recite a method comprising steps of, *inter alia*, rolling at least the first layer between spaced first and second guides configured to contact the first layer and guide the first layer along a heated guide surface toward the second layer, the rolling occurring along an arcuate surface, contacting the first layer with the second layer, and simultaneously moving the second layer to contact the first guide.

Claim 43 has been amended to recite a method comprising, *inter alia*, rolling at least the first layer between spaced first and second guides configured to contact the first layer and guide the first layer along a heated guide surface toward the second layer while moving the second layer to also contact the first guide, with the first guide being configured as a shoe, and contacting the first outer surface with the second outer surface along bonding regions thereof by the rolling along an arcuate surface;

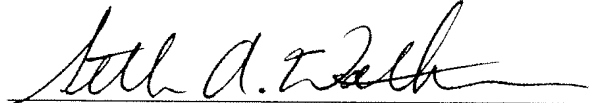
Applicant submits that the conveyor of Gable does not perform the rolling claimed in the inventions of claims 1 and 43. Instead, the rolling in claims 1 and 43 results in layer movement and partial reorientation along an arcuate surface so that layers are contacted. As understood, in Gable the layers are not partially reoriented by any rolling – rather, the conveyor merely conveys adjacent plies.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all the pending claims are in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. If the Examiner does not agree, then a personal or telephonic interview is respectfully requested to discuss any remaining issues so as to expedite the eventual allowance of the claims.

A Petition for Extension of Time is submitted concurrently herewith. Should any additional fees be required, however, please charge all required fees to Steptoe & Johnson LLP Deposit Account No. 19-4293.

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Respectfully Submitted,



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